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Press Release

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W E D N E S D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- ◆ Permanent Representative of Kuwait says he will give to Security Council President exact list of missing property items "stolen by Iraq".
- ◆ Secretary-General's mission to Iraq and Kuwait to assess humanitarian relief needs continues work.
- ◆ United Nations special mission to Kuwait arrives in Bahrain.

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The Permanent Representative of Kuwait, Mohammad A. Abulhasan, said today at a press conference at Headquarters that the Kuwaiti people were now living in the aftermath of 209 days of "brutal Iraqi occupation".

He said he had just returned from Kuwait where he had personally seen the scope of the destruction and devastation and its effects on the people, the economy and the environment. He added that the United Nations mission sent to the area would very soon witness the extent of devastation and ruin.

Mr. Abulhasan expressed concern over the lack of progress in the exchange of prisoners and captives and was alarmed to see that the Iraqi regime was delaying the implementation of Security Council resolutions relating to Kuwait, particularly the ones with regard to prisoners of war. The Iraqi authorities had clearly violated the 1949 Geneva Conventions by not handing over prisoners of war to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), he said, adding that only 1,200 prisoners had been released so far.

The Kuwaiti Ambassador said further that the Iraqi authorities were not implementing resolution 686 which, among other things, demands that Iraq return Kuwaiti property. The letter from the Iraqi Foreign Minister informing the United Nations that Iraq was returning Kuwaiti gold and currency, aircraft and museum objects, did not specify the stolen or confiscated quantities. Mr. Abulhasan said that the Kuwaiti Government had a wider list of items that had been looted or confiscated from the country.

(more)

The Kuwaiti Ambassador said he was giving the Security Council President tonight an exact list of missing items and was anticipating to establish liaison with the United Nations Secretariat so that the properties could be exchanged through the Organization.

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The mission sent by the Secretary-General to Iraq and Kuwait to assess the need for urgent humanitarian relief continued its work in Baghdad yesterday and again this morning. It is headed by Under-Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari.

All joint working groups, consisting of senior Iraqi government officials and members of the mission, made further analyses of available data. They are currently working on plans to make inspection visits to a number of locations in various parts of Iraq outside Baghdad during the rest of the week.

Yesterday, Mr. Ahtisaari met with senior Iraqi and foreign diplomatic representatives. Members of the mission had a working dinner at the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Today, Mr. Ahtisaari inspected several power stations in Baghdad.

Apart from members of the Secretariat, the mission also comprises senior personnel from a number of United Nations humanitarian organizations.

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The United Nations special mission to Kuwait, headed by former Under-Secretary-General Abdulrahim A. Farah, arrived this morning in Bahrain.

Immediately after his arrival, Mr. Farah, accompanied by team leaders of the mission, paid a courtesy visit on Bahrain's Prime Minister, Sheikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa. During the meeting, the Prime Minister strongly condemned the extensive destruction, loss of human life and human rights abuses perpetrated against Kuwait and its people. He expressed his country's appreciation for the United Nations role during the Kuwait crisis, and Bahrain's full support for the United Nations mission. Mr. Farah explained to the Prime Minister the role of the mission and its terms of reference.

Also during the day, Mr. Farah and team leaders had meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, and the Minister of Information, Tarek Al-Moayyad, who later hosted a luncheon for the whole mission.

The mission is expected to proceed to Kuwait on Saturday, 16 March.

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